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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews some key ideas that have emerged from recent research into administrative practices in education and their relationship to organizational culture. "Culture" is defined as a system of knowledge and conceptions that members of an organization use for giving meaning to and coping with problems that they experience. The paper focuses on the processes through which an organization's historically evolved culture is modified and augmented by administrators as they organize themselves and others. The first section demonstrates that the process of organization can be seen as a form of cultural action through which shared social realities and assumptions are created, renegotiated, or terminated. The second section considers power and structure--two key resources typically used to control the significant and legitimate aspects of educational institutions. Section 3 illustrates the role administrators play in distributing cultural knowledge (or "cultural capital") during the educational process. Finally, it is argued that despite some limitations, cultural analysis of administrative talk and other actions is crucial to fully understanding the nature and consequences of the concepts of "organization" and "development." (PGD)

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Talking up and Justifying Organisation: The Creation and Control of Knowledge about being organised.

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TALKING UP AND JUSTIFYING ORGANISATION:
THE CREATION AND CONTROL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BEING ORGANISED

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to convey some of the key ideas that have emerged from recent research into administrative practices in education. Throughout, culture is held to be a system of knowledge and conceptions, which members of an organisation use to give meaning to and to cope with problems they experience. This organisational culture is evident in behaviours and artefacts and it is transmitted to present and new members. This paper focusses on processes through which an organisation's historically evolved culture is modified and augmented by administrators as they organise themselves and others.

The first section will demonstrate how organising people and developing organisations can be interpreted as a form of cultural action through which shared social realities and assumptions are created, renegotiated or terminated. The second section will examine two key resources typically used to control what is held to be significant and legitimate in educational institutions; namely power, and structure. The third section will illustrate the role that administrators play in distributing cultural knowledge during the educational process by describing it as a form of cultural capital. Finally, it is argued that despite some limitations, the cultural analysis of administrative talk and other actions is crucial to a full understanding of the nature and consequence of what is termed 'organisation' and 'development'.

ADMINISTRATORS' TALK AND CONTROL

VERBAL REHEARSALS TO BUILD POLICY

What are the processes used by influential administrators to generate ideas, understandings and agreements about collective action? There is relatively little material available from direct research into administrators' practice to assist this examination simply because it has been so difficult to obtain (*see Macpherson, 1985a*). The evidence that exists tends to confirm that educational administrators use talk as the major tool of that aspect of their work which they label 'organisation' and 'development'. Three studies have been selected to illuminate the potency of talk.

Gronn's (*1983*) case study investigated how senior administrators in an institution decided on the deployment of staff . They talked about deployment, about controlling 'deployment' and about the language games they later played to retain control of the rationale of 'deployment'. Talk, in this sense, was an instrument (*Hodgkinson, 1978:204*) serving clarification, decision-making and implementation. It was therefore catalytic and the vehicle for the creation of taken-for-granted knowledge about being deployed and organised. But how was this finding reached?

Two crucial questions guided Gronn's research in an Australian school: what was the nature of the control accomplished by the words of the administrator and those administered, and; how did the words accomplish that control? In the school, 'Corridor Work' initiated the action on neutral ground. Issues were raised here for informal treatment. Architectural and interactional factors contributed to an ambiguous chumminess between staff. Status had been temporarily suspended. Later, when administrators analysed political and professional options, their thinking was riddled with shifts in concern between their own and others' interests. Gradually, the articulation of ideas among this elite group let to the creation of a taken-for-granted stock of administrative knowledge about deployment. These premises were later evident as the basis of the principal's operating assumptions. These assumptions could, however, only be fully understood by those who took part in their creation, as with any cultural artefact.

Eventually, of course, the emerging construction, labelled 'policy', became public knowledge. It was embedded in the principal's opening statement at a staff meeting and was really an invitation for all staff to define 'the deployment situation' as he saw it. Rather than refuse the invitation, or ask for its value base, some sought amendments to achieve their own particular needs. The micropolitics of opportunism shrouded ends.

The origins of the principal's definition of policy related to earlier institutionalised stocks-of-knowledge such as last year's practices, vestiges of system policy, legal and economic contexts

and so on. It was also interesting to note that although either of the two senior administrators could claim to be speaking authoritatively on deployment given their experience in such matters, the principal's definition had the weight of positional authority and thus was allowed to prevail as the accepted view. This is not to argue that the principal was above influence. His subjective definitions of the situation and deployment futures had to be articulated and discussed (and thus negotiated) as a result of corridor talk. The rules-for-success for this principal emerged and implied that:

> Teachers who became administrators have to adjust to having teachers attempt to control them. This means listening to staff speaking as authorities before replying authoritatively. They have to listen....and be verbally parsimonious in exercising their control by making their own words count and knowing when to make them count.
>
> Gronn, 1983:18

The particular value of this study was the way it portrayed how the principal's informal 'corridor talk' and other verbal rehearsals gradually created knowledge that provided a basis to policy agreed at the staff meeting and later used to justify action. Such is the work of talk. How does it unfold in more formal settings? Another piece of research offers many clues.

CONCLUSIONS-ALL-MUST-ACCEPT

Four people in a large public-sector institution were expected by their appointment duties to consider "...the job potential of a person employed by the Organisation" (*Silverman and Jones, 1976:155*). From a detailed analysis of the language the four senior public administrators used, a three stage process was identified. The three stages discovered bear a remarkable similarity to the process described by Gronn (*1985*).

The first stage was concerned with the articulation of a 'corpus of data' that had to be taken seriously – the Premises-All-Can-Accept. Conversational banter like 'corridor work', did *not* have to be presented as objective, indeed the status of informal utterances were accepted by the panellists as opinions or expressions of prejudice. But, most notably, when "the speaker attends to the proper location of the [same] judgments in the assembling of a conversation, he can offer his 'views' without 'substantiation' or location in a 'wider picture' and need not anticipate present or subsequent challenges to the reliability of his account". (*Silverman and Jones 1976:155*). Opinions, if presented with subtlety, stood as facts!

The basic technique used by all four panellists involved, was to assemble a few unchallengeable 'facts' on which subsequent judgment could be grounded, if necessary. Facts were arranged so that they (not the panel) could 'speak for themselves'. Whenever alternative interpretations were possible, the 'proper reading' was discussed at length and eventually negotiated so that the most 'objective' account of the pattern of data (consistent with community rules) could be added to the corpus of facts already agreed. In this way 'facts' and 'interpretations' were compounded incrementally into 'obvious' 'truths'. 'Data' plus 'proper reading' could 'speak for themselves'. Throughout this and all stages, members of the panel rigorously demonstrated to each other how communal, how rule-governed, how objective and how serious their work was.

Once the Premises-All-Can-Accept had been negotiated, the next stage was to reaffirm the community rules about Steps-All-Can-Follow to justify the report. Here the concern of the panel of administrators was not to do with the individual case, but the procedural niceties of setting an audit trail, and *being seen* to have provided for accountability. Communal standards in this regard were invoked to review the assemblage and presentation of 'facts' in an impersonal, irrefutable logic. It was concluded by Silverman and Jones (*1976:169*) that "facts are resources for the communities of bureaucracy and science". Even when common-sense dictated a short cut, or levity threatened the sanctity of the process, procedural rules were invoked (out of order, let's get down to business) to create an objective, logical rationale for the presentation of findings. This rationale mirrored the official ideology of the organisation. It was a bureaucratic rationality.

The third and final stage was the application of this framework, to produce Conclusions-All-Must-Accept. Here the panel members worked assiduously to display "the rule-governed character of their proceedings and of their conclusions" (*Silverman and Jones, 1976:161*). The use of standardised report forms served well to foster the impression of a neutral process, and

along with panel consensus, created the situation where any charge of bias would reinforce rather than threaten the community and its rules.

The consequences of the panel's approach and the nature of their report was then fully evident. They had, in effect, coopted the language and rules of the Organisation to the extent where the Conclusions-All-Must-Accept on display not only borrowed from but reinforced the authority of *any* number of the collective. Put simply, the de-authored speech of the panel's report had adopted the authoritative language of the Organisation. Any challenge to the report would challenge the official discourse and rationality of the Organisation itself. So what happens when this process breaks down?

CONTESTED REALITIES

To understand what occurs when the realities of administrators encounter alternative 'facts' and organisational fictions, we can turn to Leila Berg's (*1968*) *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School*. Her investigations into corporal punishment in an English county revealed substantial inconsistencies between administrative policy and practices. She published preliminary findings, and then sought access for a follow-up article:

> On the date fixed, I arrived at County Hall....In the Chief Inspector's anteroom I was introduced by his secretary to several heads. We were then all shown into the Chief Inspectors room. He opened the meeting. His words were 'I think it is very kind of us to give up this beautiful summer morning to come and talk to Miss Leila Berg'...
>
> I'm so sorry, Dr Payling, I'm afraid that's me'.
>
> A brief silence. Then -
>
> 'I didn't know you were here already. You look like a headmistress'.
>
> 'I would just like to remark on what you've just said -'
>
> 'NO! NO! Wait till I've finished! I will not have you speaking whenever you feel like it! You'll listen to me!'
>
> **Berg, 1968:202-3**

The Chief Inspector then reiterated the public policy that was inconsistent with privately sponsored practices and ended by flourishing the brown booklet,*Punishment in Schools*, shouting:

> 'I don't suppose Miss Berg has seen this!' When he had finished, I said I was sorry he had prevented me from speaking. I had merely wanted first to say that I resented his deliberate whipping up of hostility against me, and secondly, to give the heads the correct information that it was not I who had forced them to 'give up this beautiful summer morning', but the L.C.C. as the Chief Inspector knew perfectly well....and I recounted the steps that had let up to this meeting. Then I said 'I have, of course, seen the fairly pleasant brown booklet, that is fairly easily obtainable. I have also seen this, which is not so pleasant, not so easily obtainable, but was reissued seven years after that brown booklet was published', and I held up a white double-leaflet headed *Corporal Punishment*.
>
> **Berg, 1985:203-2**

This exchange exhibited the elements of knowledge creation in the Gronn and Silverman and Jones cases examined above. Talk here was also being used in an attempt to reassert control over policy-making and to legitimate that control largely by assertion. Berg's unintended penetration and dismantling of assumptions about territory and authority demonstrate how central the acceptance of heirarchical relationships is to the control of negotiations over realities and administrative knowledge. Unchallengeable 'facts', so necessary for subsequent judgements, were demonstrably challengeable. The Chief Inspector held to premisses Berg would not accept. She refused to follow his logic, and worse, confronted him with an 'in-house' contradiction to his public policy, his public conclusions-all-must-accept. Predictably, his only defence was to fall back on the formality of office, the sanctity of confidentiality and to claim privileged rights to knowledge on behalf of the London City Council:

'That is highly confidential!'

'I know. It says so on the outside. Why is it?'

'This is intolerable! This is grossly improper! I don't know who gave you the document! Nobody has the right –'

'Why would you call it improper for anyone to know that their children in school can be hit with a cane of the approved pattern? Why do you think I, a parent and a citizen, have no rights to know –'

Berg, 1968:205

It should not be drawn that evidence reviewed above is representative of all organisers in education, but it does offer valuable insights into the creation of administrative assumptions and operational realities. The evidence provides examples of talk being work.

TALK-AS-ACTION

There is a substantial body of literature following Mead (*1964*) , Schutz (*1964*) and the work of Berger and Luckman (*1966*) that has explored the role that symbolic meanings play in creating, sustaining or changing assumptions about organisation.

From this literature it seems reasonable to infer that as each individual in an organisation strives to control the symbolism of roles, structure and context, there is a struggle to expand a personal zone of discretion in the social phenomena known as 'the organisation'. (*Silverman, 1970*). By talking with others, and by taking other actions, each person is party to a pattern of interaction that builds up over time into the ordered sets of practices. Formalised and institutionalised, ordered patterns of relating to others are usually referred to metaphorically as 'structure'. These patterns of practices reflect the initiatives and the routines of individuals, the consequences of actions taken and the stock-of-knowledge people bring to each situation. The point here is that we should consider 'role' as re-created practices and define 'action' as the symbolic meanings of behaviour. There is an often overlooked, but substantial difference between behaviour, like raising one finger, and the significant cultural meanings of such an action. It is the symbolism of the words that convey meanings, and hence, accomplish the work of talk in administering meanings. The symbolism, of course, varies with each organisational culture (*Connell, 1985*).

Let me review the argument to this point. The first study, Gronn's, demonstrated how central talk is in the achievement of control and how talk is the medium through which realities are sustained and renegotiated. It also introduced the essence of 'organisation' and 'development'. They are cultural artefacts, however seemingly real and far reaching their consequences in peoples' lives. Verbal rehearsals were shown to be a major tool used to create and negotiate operational fictions, fictions that would later be posed as 'policy', be underpinned with 'facts' and used to justify and sustain changes to what were collectively known as 'organisation' and justified as 'development'. Policy is thereby defined as a subset of organisational culture that has been operationalised.

The Silverman and Jones research examined the work of a panel of administrators in a large public-sector organisation. Their three-stage explanation of processes included Premisses-All-Can-Accept, Steps-All-Can-Follow and Conclusions-All-Must-Accept. Most notably, an enormous amount of time was given over to defining what was significant, and thus served to foreclose alternative ways of valuing 'job potential'. The attention given to mutual reassurance on procedures spoke of doubts about the value base used as the primary source of legitimation. They were driven, as it were, by the dominant metaphors of their organisation. They were impelled to demonstrate their absolute objectivity and neutrality, and to reaffirm community values. This was accomplished by giving disproportionate weight to objective and scientific 'facts' in explanations. In a phrase, a bureaucratic rationality ruled.

The Berg study, of challenged realities, also demonstrated how some types of administrators' talk with other practices lead them into mind-sets which puzzle or annoy others with alterntive assumptions. Although it is clear by now that the symbolic meanings of action, such as talk, serve to sustain and change organisational realities, the control of what is seen as educationally significant and what is right now deserves closer attention. The next section will therefore examine how power and structure are used to control significance and legitimacy in educational organisations.

THE POWERFUL IN ACTION

Aspects of social organisation are constantly obvious in recent portrayals of highly successful educators. For example, before his appointment Tate (appointed Victoria's first Director of Education in 1902 when only 38 years old) had "shown himself to be eager for office, tough and resourceful, a shrewd operator of the Department machine, persuasive." (*Selleck, 1982:154*). Crucial were the actions Tate used to create influence. One example must suffice. In 1908 he campaigned for the extension of State secondary schools. He:

> seized every opportunity to push home his advantage. He stalked the lobbies and took his convictions, his persuasiveness and his copious lantern slides around the state [to argue] ..... that 'school-power' was an 'imperial necessity'. For all his admiration of British institutions Tate did not behave as civil servants were supposed to do. He was not an anonymous administrator endeavouring to implement a government's policies.
>
> Selleck, 1982:189

Power often appears to be a phenomenon associated with a series of personality traits made significant by action. It is also associated with an ability to organise, sustain or dramatically alter the operational assumptions in the minds of others. A biographical example comes from ancient times:

> It was evident to me that my first task was to destroy the enemy army in Africa. And here I found myself handicapped by mutiny in these very legions upon whose loyalty I had counted most ..... They and I were indispensable to each other and this was a fact they knew well. Yet they were now presuming to trade on this fact of our interdependence ..... Could they not see that, if I were to obey and they were to command, the whole nature of the enduring bond between us would be broken and transgressed? I asked to hear their complaints and then listened to speech after speech dealing with the same themes - their wounds, their hardships, their great deeds, the rewards they expected, their claim to be demobilised ..... When I did speak, I surprised them. I announced, in as indifferent a tone as possible, that they would all be demobilised at once .....
>
> As I spoke I could feel how bitterly the soldiers were wounded by my words. They resented the thought that they would not take part in the final [African campaign] triumph; but what chiefly distressed them was the thought that I could do without them ..... They were used, of course, to being addressed as "Comrades" or "Fellow-Soldiers". Now, with great deliberation, as though to emphasise that I had already discharged them, I used the word "Citizens" ..... At this there was an immediate outcry. The mutiny was over. Soon the men were begging me to punish the ringleaders ..... I told them I would forgive all except the Tenth Legion. Later I received deputations from the men of the Tenth begging that the whole legion should be punished by decimation and then again allowed to serve with me. I would not, of course, agree to so cruel and so unjust a punishment; but I did, in the end, forgive the men. Then, with the utmost speed ..... I began to make preparations for the invasion of Africa.
>
> Julius Caesar, in Warner, 1967:342-345

To understand power, it is evident that we must look closely at the actions of the powerful, mindful of their setting. Consider Tate for a while. It was noted above that Tate had personality characteristics that set him apart from his peers. He was persuasive, persistent and utterly purposeful. But his power to sustain change was also due to his ability to organise and fix others' thinking. Like Caesar, he had a sophisticated grasp of management technique. For example, Tate ensured the loyalty and service of his staff. His " ..... determination to control his Department showed in his careful attention to office procedure" (*Selleck, 1982:249*). He knew well that to design and to insist on particular routines served to give life to (or operationalise if you will) particular assumptions. Hence certain values (*Tate's*) were institutionalised and defended, at cost to others'. It was noticeable how, over time, reformism was replaced by a defensive bureaucratic ideology:

> Tate grew to be jealous of the expertise which he and his professional colleagues had. The Department knew best. This belief, the wariness brought about by the constant struggle against governments who cared little for education, and his personal identification with policies he had helped develop, made him edgy with critics and as the years went by inclined to speak of loyalty. He encouraged the able, the adventurous and the independent but he liked to be the one who criticised educational policies; in fact, he grew particularly anxious if criticism came from internal sources. Moreover, while he tried to increase the Department's influence ..... he resisted efforts to bring the Department under independent scrutiny. He would not submit the Department to the checks he was anxious to impose on others ..... He built a powerful Department by being swift to increase its influence and equally swift to resist the efforts of others to gain influence over it.
>
> **Selleck, 1982:263**

This pattern of attending to the installation of selected values is reminiscent of the consequences of the administrative style of another famous Australian, General Monash. Cuttack, *(cited in Serle, 1982:385)* wrote that Monash's staff "found themselves committed to the most continuous hard work they had ever done in their lives. ..... He left nothing to chance which industry and foresight could make certain. He made no plans until he had exhausted the ideas of all staff and subordinate commanding officers; then he would suggest a scheme which embraced the good points of all." While his subordinates found his ability to synthesise ideas formidable, and thus one source of his power to persuade, it is important to realise that Monash himself knew the crucial consequence of his style. Indeed, as he declared on becoming a Corps Commander, "his first task was 'to acquire a moral ascendancy' over his senior commanders and staff", and thus:

> to secure complete domination over their thoughts, action and policy. The first consideration was the creation of complete unity and thought, and complete unity both of administrative and tactical policy. This could not be ensured without.....inculcating high ideals, high aims, and a high standard of conduct. In particular, it was necessary to create and foster among all officers, and particularly among junior officers, a sense of responsibility to themselves, their commanders, their comrades, their men, their country and their cause.
>
> These results were achieved by close personal contact with hundreds of officers, by the holding of conferences, and by lectures and addresses, and by a constant process of critical supervision.
>
> **Monash, in Serle 1982:383**

Without labouring the point with further examples, such actions can be interpreted as the deliberate control of moral and organisational knowledge. It was noted above that policy was an operational subset of organisational culture. Are these processes of policy making and policy implementation so distant from the leadership work of educational administrators? While educators might despair at some of the values being served by these techniques, the patterns of efficient leadership are now evident enough to underpin reflection on the nature of power itself, and in particular, on three different approaches used to understand power (after Luke, 1974).

As these portrayals of 'Great Men' emphasise, power *can* easily be thought of as a tangible resource that allows some to be more influential than others. When educators talk of *others* as being 'powerful', they usually mean 'fuller of power' than themselves. In this way of speaking, power is being conceived of as a highly efficient catalyst, and as such can, like any real substance, be collected, stored and then applied, almost like a magical lubricant. Further, this one-dimensional view of power is straightforward because it means focussing on the behaviours of influential people, watching for cause and effect in decision-making, and then identifying how key issues, observable conflict, subjective interests and participation reveal policy preferences.

The basic problem with this approach to understanding power is that it is so clear-cut an approach, that much is missed. For example, by taking a behaviouralist stance to understand the decision making power of individuals, the researcher too easily adopts the biases of the

political system under observation, and tends therefore, to be blind to the ways in which the political agendas themselves are being controlled behind the displays of powerful behaviour.

A two-dimensional view of power is doubly subtle by comparison - it focusses on decision making *and* non-decision making, issues *and* potential issues, overt *and* covert conflict, as well as subjective interests, but again, all seen as policy preferences or grievances. A two-dimensional view points the way to examining bias and control in political processes, although conceiving of them too narrowly. It lacks a sociological perspective with which the administrator can examine not only decision making and non-decision making power, but also the effects of multiple social contexts and how bias is systematically mobilised in systems and institutions.

The third approach, which Lukes (*1974* 25) advocates, encourages a focus on decision making assumptions and patterns to establish *how political agendas are controlled*. This means carefully noting the origins, nature and consequences of issue making and conflict (both observable and latent) and noting how subjective and real (perhaps unrealised) interests arise and fade. To do this means interpreting the effect of political processes in terms of their multiple host social structures. Some of the implications of this third approach can be illustrated by a selective discussion of my own research (*Macpherson 1984a, 1984b*) with particular reference to the control of patterns of relationships and practices.

STRUCTURE

In this research I set out to portray what it was to be a Regional Director of Education (R.D.E.) in Victoria in 1983 by interpreting events using the meanings accorded by informants to their administrative action. Data was also illuminated by how each person's relationship with position and context was in turn related to wider host 'structures', and, how these relationships changed over time. From this exercise came a new description of structure.

How each administrator defined his 'position' and the 'structure' about him were therefore considered crucial issues. But where role theory suggested that action is the product of role expectations and personal dispositions, it was found in my study that the traditional explanation failed to account for the crucial reciprocal relationship between the symbolism of actions and their context. The reciprocal relationship was evident, for example, in the evolving nature of the local 'structure' within which the actions of the R.D.E.s were given, and in turn, gave meaning. Giddens (*1979*), however, had argued that understanding structure should not rest at this level but should also consider the 'structuration' of social systems. What did he mean by this? He defined 'structure' as rules and resources organised as properties of social systems. Three major properties of social systems were memory traces of knowledge of 'how things are to be done', social patterns organised through repeated use of that knowledge and the abilities people need to produce those properties. These properties were very evident in the 'talk' cases reviewed above. 'System' was therefore given a particular meaning; reproduced relations between actors or collectives organised as regular social practices. 'Structuration' was defined as the conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore, the reproduction of systems.

There are particular assumptions in this line of argument. For example, social systems are not constructed of parcels of functions termed roles, but of reproduced practices. 'A role ' is not a neutral element of organisation. It is a normative concept that transmits personal perceptions of expected or intended action. Another assumption is that the social system into which incumbency is embedded is in turn embedded in wider host 'structures'. These assumptions are quite inconsistent with a traditional and structural-functional view of organisation that systematically avoids questions of power, rightness and how the actions of individuals relate to structure and context. Indeed, Salaman (*1978*) argued forcefully "that organisational power and control must be seen in terms of the nature and priorities of the 'host' society rather than as consequences of particular forms of work process or technology". In my study this meant considering the neutral forms and processes of organisation, and, the nature and purposes of prevalent ideologies in order to capture the relationship between them and the society in which they were located. Personal histories and cultural affiliations were therefore considered highly relevant, and indeed, personal and biographical sources were found to underpin much of the inner development and purposes each informant had.

And what drove the twelve R.D.E.s? Although operational facets of their administration, such as attention-giving, did derive from formal and external sources, each R.D.E. was alert for shifts in others' allegiance, in 'policy' and in the language used to portray 'the situation'.

While little movement from each R.D.E.'s fundamental purposes was seen, the great shifts in tactics seen and discussed came from 'hot' information and, in particular, from interaction. When an R.D.E. was not alone working on communicated knowledge, he was compulsively moving from one key forum to another, massaging knowledge about 'structure' to the extent he could. The net impression gained was that being a Regional Director meant an all-consuming involvement, a form of participation that invoked the deepest aspects of self, values and personal development. It will also be clear by now that the term 'structure' itself was found to be an over-worked metaphor in the setting. This phenomenon requires a detailed explanation.

The political context of regionalisation was fraught with contradictions. A series of studies (*e.g. Rizvi, 1984, Angus, et. al. 1984 and Macpherson, 1986c*) have indicated that restructuring events largely constituted symbolic politics at the regional level. While political intervention in 1983 continued to be justified (*Fordham, 1985*) in terms of requiring educational administrators to serve a socially-critical ideology, the data suggested that events enhanced the power of metropolitan elites. My interpretation (*Macpherson, 1986c*) led to three propositions:

> (a) Faced with ideological challenges to their assumptions about order, control and the hierarchical distribution of wisdom, power and knowledge, some educational administrators at central and regional levels were responding with resistance strategies. These included devices such as new coping alliances, elaborated organisation and consultative processes to recreate a sense of adequate legitimacy.
>
> (b) In the absence of systematically developed and formal reference groups that articulated regional mandates, the purposes being served by educational administration at regional levels were principally mediated by the values of each Regional Director.
>
> (c) Those individuals who represented parents, principals, teachers and 'the Centre' on the State Board of Education also recognized that if Regional Boards became the mouthpiece of localist perspectives, then they would have their power bases expropriated.

How then was 'power' and 'structure' evident in this contest over what would count as the new orthodoxy of administrative practice? Mythmaking was a constant feature of R.D.E.s' actions directly related to 'structure'. Indeed they were often in a position of having to counter the effects of others' myths. For example, a political verbal symbol of great potency was 'twelve mini-bureaucracies'. It was typically employed by centralists to counter calls for regional discretion and ironically incorporated two contradications: that bureaucracy must, of itself, always serve wrong ends, and; that each interest group already represented at 'the Centre' was not itself organised as a mini-bureaucracy. This myth served centralism well by retarding the establishment of Regional Boards and the consequent claim of greater democratic legitimacy in system politics. Such a claim would have been at direct cost to rampant and covert neo-centralism. The major verbal political symbols used by R.D.E.s appeared in their constnt claims of being at the latter end of four value dimension: centralism-localism; metropolitan elitism – rural/local fellowship; academic education – practical community education; and management by crises – administrative statesmanship. The rituals in the R.D.E.s' practices (information processing, advocacy, generating techno-rational images of the regional office in the minds of subordinates) all spoke of attempts to control knowledge and conceptions, specifically to publically present the regional office as a local educational service centre directly supporting school operations and governance. A favourite one-liner was 'a one-stop-shop.' How then did 'structure' relate to the R.D.E.s' actions?

Seven meanings of 'structure' were apparent (*Macpherson, 1985b*). Although structure is from a Latin word 'to build', and refers to the construction, the composition or the inherent patterns in concrete, observable, mechanical or organic systems, all meanings used by R.D.E.s were figurative. They were social constructs inferred from events over time. Converting the abstract to concrete, reification, was widely evident, despite the metaphorical nature of the term. In some settings reification went even further, into deification.

The first, and locally important meaning of structure was to convey the *actions*, practices and processes of creating networks and assumptions. The second, again specific to administrative action, referred to *the manner* of organising relationships and organisational knowledge. The third meaning sought to interpret regionalism and centralism. It was concerned with how

the *symbiosis* of constituent parts of 'the system' (another metaphor) determined its overall character. The fourth sense of the word conveyed how precisely the distinct parts were *arranged* to coexist as a whole. The fifth and sixth meanings were manifest in definitions of 'the system's' characteristics: structure integral to 'the system', that is, simply *an edifice*, or more broadly, *a framework of organised and real units*. The seventh meaning of 'structure' was biological in nature. It emphasised *interdependence* of organisational parts of 'the system', often, for example, by referring to an organic Department's survival and life. Here, 'structure' was the skeleton to which 'the system' gave life. Together, organisational 'life' was possible. When its values were to be worshipped, deification had been achieved.

Strikingly consistent with these seven usages of the metaphor 'structure' would be organisational analysis in terms of institutional structures and functions, norms, roles and groups, whilst presuming these concepts were virtually static and determining realities of organisational life. In other words, this metaphor was being used to sustain a natural systems view of organisational reality, to perpetuate a bureaucratic rationality and to legitimate a structural-functional way of valuing practices.

Such a departure from a metaphorical definition, however, ignores the evidence above that 'structure' is a figure of speech transferring *significance to a perceived pattern* in social events (of relative stability) in a setting of vigorous micro-politics. Interaction, in what was conceived of as organisation life, occasionally settled to an extent, but only for a period, into social and cultural arrangements that allowed the development of temporary rules-for-success. We can now summarise how power relates to structure in the setting explored.

'Structure' was being used metaphorically to portray and control the concerted imaginations of organised men. It was a theoretical construct sustained and repeatedly constituted by complex transactions in an environment of micro-politics and contested values. Hence the myriad of definitions necessarily existed as the contest went on. The significant aspects of these definitions were differentiated on many dimensions, sometimes simultaneously. Only the longer-standing, shared assumptions persisted as norms, mandates and standard operating procedures. It was concluded that in order to defend preferred assumptions about organisation, in an environment of alternative values, the reification of 'structure' clearly served as a major administrative strategy.

There were, of course, good reasons why these processes were unusually evident. Given the ambiguous mandate for regionalism in Victoria, and the eroding political and bureaucratic support for regionalisation in late 1983, order, rules and 'structure' were being continuously negotiated. Definitions were discussed, redefined, bent, overlooked or suppressed as the potential inherent in each situation was perceived and weighed. Hence the intimate interrelationship discerned between the production and maintenance of three forms of 'structure': images of organisation, patterns of practice, and most subtle of all, preferred and discrete systems of knowledge with their own methods of justification, i.e. epistemologies. The upshot of understanding organisation in this manner, is that the traditional concepts of 'structure' and 'function' are no longer adequate. Further, just as the arguments above indicated the utility of 'action' as compared to behaviour, we now also require the more eclectic concept of culture to accommodate the subtleties of imagery, practices and epistemologies in organisation.

CULTURAL TOOLS, THEORY AND OUTCOMES

CULTURE

A cultural explanation of administration practice needs to take account of two crucial definitions. To elaborate the definition in the abstract above, culture is held to be:

> an interdependent and patterned system of valued, traditional and current public knowledge and conceptions, embodied in behaviours and artefacts, and transmitted to present and new members, both symbolically and non-symbolically, which a society has evolved historically, and progressively modified and augments, to give meaning to and cope with its definitions of present and future existential problems.
>
> Bullivant, 1984:4

If culture is thereby defined as a form of civilisation, and ideology as a system of beliefs belonging to a culture, then another term is required to denote how a culture is internalised in

an individual. This term, which is 'habitus', is defined as each individual's "system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis for structured, objectively unified practices" (*Bourdieu, 1979*). Habitus is a particularly useful concept for it allows a distinction to be drawn between the actions and ideologies of group culture, and the way in which each individual makes sense of (and justifies) his or her experience. The dispositions of the habitus are mediated by the structures of relationships and assumptions in the setting, and in turn, mediate how the situation is seen and what meaning is given to practice. Perception is also affected by past situations in a reciprocal manner. Based on Bourdieu's notions of habitus, a cyclical model of elaboration has been envisaged (see Figure 1 below).

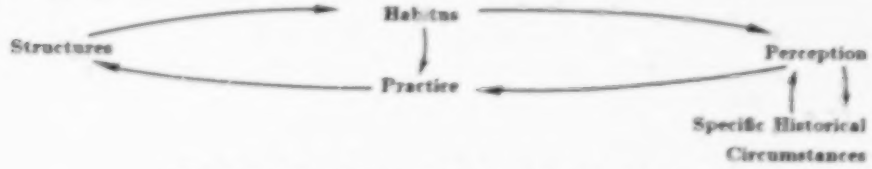

Figure 1: Reproduction and Change (*Harker, 1984*)

An example will help clarify this model. The R.D.E.s I researched were found (*Macpherson, 1986a*) to have three major operational selves (labelled System Man, Structure Man and Political Man) and a fourth deeper self; Reflective Man. These four selves together constituted the general nature of each R.D.E.'s habitus and substantially influenced how each situation was understood and acted on. The perception that each R.D.E. had of his position and context was, to a degree, idiosyncratic, and particularly evident in two ways. Firstly, when confronted by an unexpected situation, each R.D.E. rapidly switched between, and then selected and rigorously applied, one set of rules-for-success. Second, the idiosyncracies of disposition were very evident in nuances of administrative style. It was notable, for example, that the major facets of political style were found to be derived from each R.D.E.'s first major success in organisational politics. The most important consequence of this foundational experience was that it predisposed each R.D.E. to analyse political situations in particular ways. This accounted for the different consequences of the nature and outcomes of their personal rituals, and to an extent, interaction with others. The crucial point here is reproduction of and the changes in the meanings accorded to the metaphors of organisation between settings. As the imparting of cultural knowledge is actually achieved by individuals it is now appropriate to take up the questions of purpose and rightness.

Although evidence is still relatively limited, my closing argument is that the evidence emerging is powerful enough to suggest that all administrators should develop a socially-critical awareness of their practices, especially with respect to the administration of cultural capital, and yet be mindful of the relativity of this form of awareness.

CULTURAL CAPITAL

Capital, in commerce, is the total value of a business, property or stocks. To 'make capital of' is to turn something to one's advantage. Both meanings derive from an ideology about the economic, industrial and social organisation of society, namely capitalism. Capitalistic organisation means the ownership, control and direction of production of privately owned business organisations. While socialism emphasises the value of communally-owned organisation; most societies today have mixed economies of private, state and communal ownership.

To convey how aspects of culture, advantage and disadvantage an individual in society, the phrase 'cultural capital' has been coined. Watkins (*1984*) and his co-researchers used ethnographic research methods to understand how a negotiated reality (called Christian Boys College) facilitated students' access to the workplace. It was made evident that the action of administrators served to impart and defend a selected set of cultural traits, assumptions and social conventions. The actions, principally cultural in consequence, were also found to be closely related to the capitalistic demands of the school's setting and to the philosophies prevailing in the social and religious networks of the clients. It was particularly noticeable how cultural assets displaced (in the social group studied) property and wealth as the most important factor reproducing their culture, and, how school-based actions substantially controlled those processes.

What are the implications with respect to understanding administrative practice? Firstly, the school's educational administrators were deeply involved in organising and controlling a cultural function much in the ways found in the studies reviewed above. Second, their cultural work had a specific outcome, namely an interesting mixture of Irish Catholicism and capitalism in their clients, which in turn implied that alternative outcomes were possible. Third, the cultural work of these administrators was made possible by the existence of structures of assumptions in the social context of the school, and this cultural work served to sustain the existence of those structures. Fourth, it was clear that there was potential in the cultural agency of these administrators to facilitate changes to the assumptions that mediated practices, to alter acquired knowledge about society and to change the access clients had to social resources (*Watkins, 1984*).

There exists, therefore, the need for educational administrators to be aware of the role they play in the distribution of cultural capital, however unwittingly, and to become critically aware of the social purposes served by their actions. They need to examine their administrative habitus and the ideologies served by their practices. The particular value of Watkins' report, and the research effort it represents, was how it established the case that educational administrators are engaged in the administration of cultural capital. The final issues addressed in this paper are therefore the ideas that will assist the process of becoming critically aware of the social consequences of practices, and how valuable the socially-critical form of awareness is.

SOCIALLY-CRITICAL ADMINISTRATION

The value of educational administration using socially-critical ideas has proceeded reluctantly because of the strength of earlier taken-for-granted ideas about practice. As argued above, especially in the discussion on power and structure, the foundational tenets of the behavioural science tradition in the field of educational administration have tended to perpetuate and justify a bureaucratic rationality. Briefly, the enduring management-oriented traditions have it that organisation is a natural system, that practice reflects the values embodied in the organisation itself, and, that knowledge about practice and organisation in education can be limited to and defended by the ideology of structural-functionalism. But there are a number of reasons why alternative perspectives should be considered.

Firstly, Greenfield (*1975, 1985*) has effectively demonstrated that the key-stone of the behavioural science account, natural systems ideology, has reflected the perspectives of but one doctrine (instrumentalism) and that it relied on myths (such as 'organisational effectiveness') and symbols (such as administrator-as-leader) to create a rationality, an approach to legitimation and an accepted set of practices consistent with the ideology. Second, my own research (*Macpherson 1984b*) has indicated that the limited epistemological relativity of the behavioural science approach should be acknowledged and reflected in explanations of practice. By this I mean that while the behavioural approach was adequate to the task of interpreting the world of 'System Man', it could not comprehend the reconstructivist realm of 'Structure Man', nor cope with the interactional subtleties of the 'Political Man' mode. Indeed, when in the Relective mode, R.D.E.s were able to point to the advantages and disadvantages of imposing a behavioural science account of administrative phenomena. To "play the neutral bureacrat", as one put it, in a particular setting, was a micro-political strategy. Finally, it was demonstrated that the epistemological relativity of these different modes of being could be estblished for the three Regional Directors of Education in terms of conceptual realms, fundamental concerns, ideal-typical roles, origins of ideologies, and in terms of basic orientations to means-ends and to values.

Whether or not other educational administrators also live in diverse realms is yet to be conclusively established, although considerable evidence does exist, and my own experience has often suggested that it is generally the case. Lee (*1966*) did offer strong evidence to suggest that administrators are dependent on (and sometimes captive of) their major reference groups for identity and self-esteem, implying the need for Goffmanesque masks. Also consistent with the multi-realm nature of the Regional Directors' work-world are findings on gestalt-switching dynamics that produce the different administrative postures and strategies (*Crozier, 1964*) used to maintain and develop power arenas and to produce negotiated illusions of order (*Strauss et. al. 1963*). It therefore follows that working with and within multiple realms is likely to be a common experience amongst senior administrators. If, as I demonstrated with regard

to three R.D.E.s., each realm has its own justification for knowledge, then the use of an ideologically exclusive form of interpretation is inappropriate. The third reason for being aware of alternative ways of valuing practice is that a socially-critical perspective presumes that the educational administrator is central to the negotiation of order and structure and should be held accountable for social ends thus served by his agency.

To summarise, the key assumptions here are that order is constructed in schools and systems through the dynamics of culture (myths, metaphors, rituals, language, ceremony) and through the systematic structuring of knowledge (selection, organisation, transmission, distribution, control and justification). As these mechanics have been related by Bates (*1981a, 1981b, 1982a*) to the administrative practices of dividing knowledge, pupils, teachers, time and locations and to the assembling of different forms of social and epistemological order, what are the implications?

SOCIALLY-CRITICAL THOUGHT

The greatest impact of the socially-critical approach to interpreting educational administration lies in the realm of demystification, prosecuted, for example, by Bates, at two levels. At the first level he was able to show that 'professionalism' is a metaphor for control and authority serving centralist interests (*Bates, 1980a*) and that the rationalities behind 'education systems' are interrelated structures of social, cultural, epistemological and educational activities (*Bates, 1980b, 1980c*). The second level of demystification became evident when Bates (*1982a*) turned to two concerns of classical theorists, motivation and morale. Just "as the culture of the school is.....the product of conflict and negotiations" (*Bates, 1982b:12*), so could the epistemological pedigrees and behavioural science orientations of theoretical accounts of administrative action be contested.

Bates (*1982b:2*) attacked the "mainline theorists" who used positivistic approaches to reproduce "pathological" theories. His charge was that a behavioural science approach is but one ideology and encourages a non-reflective social technology of control. The effect of this, he argues, is to divert attention from issues such as inequities in education and society. It becomes too easy for administrators to merely manage and to reproduce knowledge about practice without realising the potential they have to democratise communication, relationships and culture, and thereby transform practices and outcomes. The 'demystificationalist's' agenda is consistent with presenting "an alternative definition of organisations and with explain(ing) how well-meaning people.....participate in the fiction of intended rationality in the service of official goals" (*Perrow, in Sarri and Hasenfeld, 1978*).

It must be stressed that despite the cautions that follow, the point should not be overlooked that although socially-critical theorising is recent, it is acquiring international respect in the understanding of organisation and development. Moreover, this accomplishment has been the contribution of relatively few, when compared to the massive intellectual and institutional resources that often appear devoted in Australia, the U.S.A. and in the U.K. to the furthering of more traditional perspectives. Nevertheless, some limitations to the approach derive in part from the very recency of the ideas. For example, the first problem is the way claims are made for the approach.

Two major concepts in the socially-critical approach to understanding are "demystification" and "emancipation". Both concepts are used in challenges to the hegemonic nature of behavioural science accounts of practice. It is a paradox that the socially-critical account is itself ideologically exclusive, often couched in mystifying language and could be proposing an alternative hegomony. Why is this the case?

'Emancipation' is a concept from a different paradigm of enquiry from 'demystification'. The former derives from radical humanism or radical structuralism whereas the latter is consistent with interpretivism (*Morgan, 1980*). The difficulty here is that while on one hand the socially-critical approach to interpreting practice might serve to reveal the existence of multiple selves and systems of justification by demystifying practice, on the other, we have the strong likelihood of a new 'functionalism of the Left'. By this is meant that it is very tempting to argue for the installation of but *one* approach to practice, that of the 'Socially-Critical Man'. 'Emancipation' implies the imperatives of a neo-Marxist, socio-political movement (*Bates, 1985*) that brooks no contradiction. In contrast, demystification emphasises illuminative purposes without necessarily challenging the nature of the existing order.

For example, when unravelling the work experience of R.D.E.s, I found (*Macpherson, 1986a*) that a continuum of emancipation- enslavement provided an inadequate conceptual basis for explaining changes in administrative selves, practices, outcomes or assumptions. Instead of relying on the presumed rightness of a specific moral posture, my study suggested that the central dynamic of "beingness" has to do with an elaboration of selves and their justified knowledges in pragmatic, socio-political, biographical as well as ethical contexts. In other words, the Regional Director's real world of pragmatic eclecticism could not be squared with the *a priori* unilateralism of a Socially-Critical Man, despite his challenging ideals.

CONCLUDING NOTE

The real problem now seems to be to explain and account for the eclecticism of practice, rather than to dismiss it or deride it using one valuable perspective. Another task awaiting the attention of philosophers is to advise how administrators might compromise in a morally defensible manner when facing socially-critical, economically-critical, managerially-critical and educationally-critical imperatives. The field of educational administration has been singularly lacking in this type of philosophical machinery (*Macpherson, 1986b*) although there are strong indications in the Commonwealth (*e.g. Rizvi 1985, Miklos et. al., 1985*) that this challenge has been taken up.

To conclude, 'organisation' has been conceived of as a cultural process whereby an administrative habitus influences the reproduction and elaboration of assumptions in other peoples' minds about 'being organised'. It follows from the discussion of 'power' and 'structure' above and elsewhere (*Macpherson, 1986c, 1985c*) that 'development' and 'reform' are metaphors for a dialectical process embedded in social contexts (*Watkins, 1985*) whereby a facet of social reality is being reconstructed. In these processes, the centrality of 'talk' as an administrative tool is constantly reaffirmed. Indeed, as demonstrated above, the particular value of cultural explanations of administrative practice is that organisational change can be portrayed as social reality being transformed. It is being renegotiated between influential peoples' actions and the patterns of their assumptions about practices, context and rightness.

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